

Centre needed to serve Blacks

CONTINUED FROM PG. 1
loaded 1998 four-door,
red Mercury Mystique.

The consolation prize is a Caribbean cruise for two that can be taken anytime between January and April with Sunquest. There are two itineraries from which to choose. The cost per ticket is \$5. Tickets also come in books of 10.

The most immediate need in this fundraising effort is for volunteers to sell tickets, and, of course, for people to buy tickets, Stewart said.

For those wanting to volunteer to sell tickets, "all they have to do is make a phone call, just ask for the receptionist and he will do the rest. Give us your location and we will deliver tickets to your home so that makes it easy to get involved," Stewart said. The JCA phone number is 416-746-5772.

Tickets can also be bought at stores and businesses throughout the Black and Caribbean community. The JCA will advise callers where to get them. Those wanting to buy tickets can also do so by phoning the JCA and paying by credit card.

For those opposed to participating in raffles, a donation is suggested. "Even if you don't believe in buying raffle tickets...or don't believe in gambling, then you can make a \$10 donation and you will receive a tax receipt," said

Stewart.

The building project also needs construction trades people in the community to volunteer their skills and time. Those who volunteer in this way can invoice the JCA for their labour and can receive receipts for income tax purposes as donations.

Other non-profit organizations can volunteer to sell tickets on a commission basis so that their non-profit group can benefit from the sale of tickets. Tickets will be sold at a 10 per cent discount to non-profit organizations.

In an example of the need for a community centre the August 29 draw will be held at the Ontario Federation of Labour building. Stewart pointed out that it is disappointing that money leaves our community every time we rent space in halls and community centres run by other communities.

Pointing to the need for our own community centre, Stewart recalled that during the recent volcanic eruptions in Montserrat there was no place available for donated goods to be collected. During the time of Hurricane Gilbert the former JCA centre on Dupont Street was shut down for a month and used solely as a drop off point for donations.

"We're always willing to make the place available... Once the centre is up and operational we will be able to offer rental

space at a discount... since we are a non-profit organization. Whatever funds are generated from the rental of the centre will go into the organization to help it continue to provide all these services to the community," Stewart said.

The JCA Centre is within easy reach from TTC stops and within walking distance from the Jane/Finch community. In 1996 the JCA helped 26,000 people in the Black and Caribbean community and this was done without a fully functioning community centre.

Stewart says that a number of times government agencies have called the JCA seeking sponsorship for programs but there was no proper space in which to run these programs.

"Sometimes we have had to decline because we didn't have the space and these are programs which would benefit the community," he said.

A lot is therefore dependent on the success of the raffle. The building permit is already in place and a construction manager has been hired, with the start of construction set for September to take place over six months.

"Everything is in place but the money," Stewart added.

Stewart described himself as "cautiously optimistic" regarding this latest building fundraising venture. "If every Black and

Caribbean person in the GTA were to donate to the building fund then we would be able to build this centre without the bank loan. My approach is not, 'buy a ticket to win a car.' You could spend \$5 elsewhere to win a million dollars. The point here is to support the building of the community. It's only through unity that we can make this thing a reality. Moreover, we aren't going to have any political clout without a place of our own."

Stewart said that politicians won't respect or pay attention to the community when community functions they are invited to are held at the Croatian Hall, for example. "They are not going to take us seriously. However, when we have a centre in the Black community then they will see that we are progressing and will pay attention."

As an example Stewart noted that the JCA asked the federal government for financial help but the request was denied. The federal government has however given financial aid to the Chinese community to build their centre in Scarborough. The Portuguese — a much smaller community than the Black community — also received financial aid to have their centre renovated.

"Because we have no political clout we are given short shrift," he said.